

Fiscal Highlights

\$104 Million for Watershed and Grazing Projects in Seven Years - Ivan D. Djambov

The total funding expended on watershed restoration and grazing improvement in Utah between FY 2006 and FY 2012 is almost \$104 million. Of this amount, \$23 million came through legislative appropriations to either the Grazing Improvement Program (GIP) or the Watershed Restoration Initiative (WRI), and the remaining \$81 million was contributed by these two programs' partners: landowners, private organizations, and federal and state agencies. On September 10, 2013, the managers of the two programs responded to legislative intent language requiring them to "identify performance measures that track and report the public benefits from their projects" and to provide "a plan to improve the coordination and collaboration between the two programs."

Grazing Improvement Program

The Grazing Improvement Program was created in FY 2007. The program is managed by the Department of Agriculture and Food and its mission is: "To improve the productivity, health and sustainability of our rangelands and watersheds."

Staff

A portion of the funding appropriated by the Legislature is used to fund 4.4 FTE (on average over the years), including a director and GIP coordinators. The GIP staff has the responsibility to take applications from producers and develop projects, along with costs, maps, and management plans. Coordinators are also responsible for following up to make sure projects are complete so that payments can be made. They are also responsible for giving technical advice and expertise.

Process

GIP has the following process for deciding which projects are to be funded:

1. Landowner or permittee applies for a project by contacting the regional coordinator. At times they are assisted by NRCS, BLM, US Forest Service, or SITLA rangeland management specialists to develop a proposal. A completed project has to include: goals/objectives, project description, monitoring and follow-up management plan, budget, maps and shape files.
2. GIP coordinators and partners rank the proposed projects. Each of the six Regional Grazing Advisory Boards meets to review and make recommendations on projects.
3. The State Grazing Board meets to review and make recommendations on projects.
4. Projects are sent to the Resource Development Coordinating Committee (a clearinghouse for information on activities affecting state and public lands), which gives other agencies an opportunity to comment on projects.
5. The Commissioner of Agriculture approves use of GIP funding for projects.
6. GIP coordinators manage the projects, work with landowners and permittees to submit payments and prepare completion reports.

Funding

The funding for the administration of GIP is included in the Agriculture Administration line item, and the money for the projects is appropriated in a separate line item, the Rangeland Improvement line item. The total funding for GIP appropriated by the Legislature between FY 2007 and FY 2012 is \$8.8 million. This amount includes funding from the General Fund (appropriated directly and through the Rangeland Improvement Restricted Account), ARDL Restricted Account, Federal Funds, and Dedicated Credits. The total funding contributed by GIP partners for the same period is \$10.8 million.

Performance Measures

GIP has used the following performance measures in the past:

- Acres impacted (in addition to the number of acres treated, it includes the estimated impact on the areas adjacent),
- Meetings attended (staff meeting landowners and land managers), and
- Technical assistance (number of producers receiving technical assistance).

Watershed Restoration Initiative Program

The Watershed Restoration Initiative program, housed in the Department of Natural Resources, is a broad partnership with the mission: "To conserve, restore and manage ecosystems in priority areas across the state to enhance Utah's:

- wildlife and biological diversity
- water quality and yield for all uses
- opportunities for sustainable uses."

The WRI was developed to restore and improve Utah's watersheds by bringing together state, federal, and private land owners and land-management organizations to coordinate efforts and share resources. The WRI's goals and direction are set at the state level but projects are developed, reviewed, and ranked at a local level through five regional teams.

Staff

The funding appropriated to WRI by the Legislature is used to fund only one employee, the WRI Director. The director's responsibilities include: working with partners to identify needs, opportunities, and progress of projects; participating in project review meetings; recommending funding for projects; and monitoring research for new watershed restoration methods.

The WRI Director is not the only administrative staff in the process. The program extensively uses administrative staff employed by their partners. For example, the WRI is supported by two staff (habitat coordinator and database specialist) employed by the Division of Wildlife Resources (DWR) who carry-out many of the detailed needs of the partnership, including contracting, coordinating partner funding, tracking project status from the proposal stage to completion, maintaining the WRI database, and providing technical assistance with projects. Also, DWR staff at the Seed Warehouse in Ephraim provide major logistical and technical support. All project proponents and managers are employed by partners, and all of the chairs of the regional teams come from partner agencies.

Process

WRI has the following process for deciding which projects are to be funded:

1. A project is submitted to the WRI database.
2. The project proposal is reviewed preliminarily and receives feedback in the database.
3. All completed project proposals are presented to one of the five Regional Teams (15-30 participants) at an open meeting.
4. Regional Teams vote to move project ahead for ranking or return for additional work.
5. Regional Team ranks project (numeric and then high-medium-low).
6. WRI Director assigns matching funding from other partners. Often the money from partners ends up funding the entire project without any need to use the WRI appropriations from the Legislature.
7. DNR Executive Director approves use of WRI funding.
8. Project manager completes project, submits invoices for payment, and prepares completion report on final methods, acreages treated, and costs including in-kind contributions.

Funding

The total funding appropriated by the Legislature for the Watershed program between FY 2006 and FY 2012 is \$14.5 million. This funding is a combination of direct appropriations from the General Fund and from the state's sales tax labeled as Dedicated Credits. During this same period, the WRI partners brought \$69.7 million for watershed projects.

Performance Measures

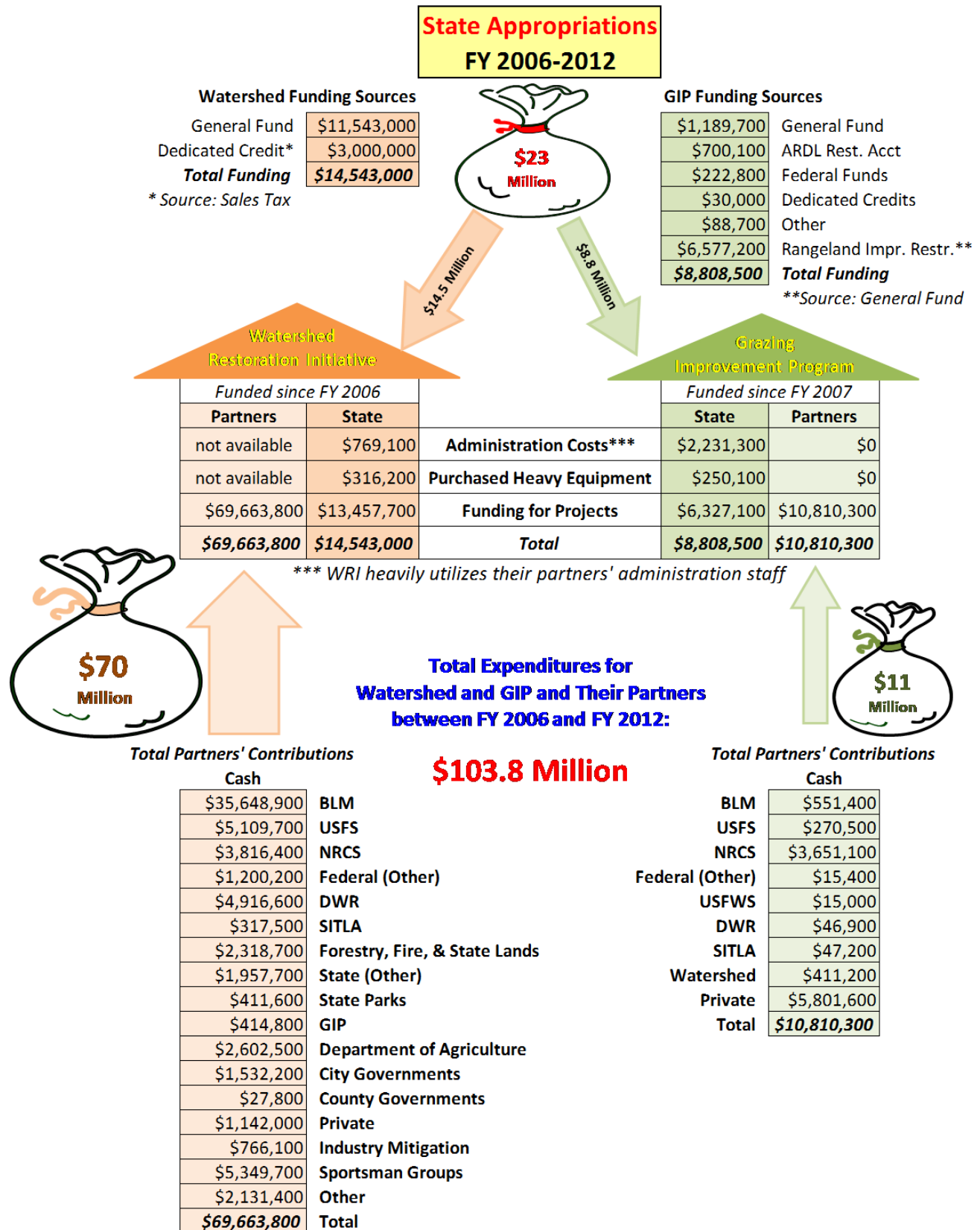
The WRI program has used the following measures in the past:

- Acres treated (tracks the number of acres treated),
- Funding leverage (how many times each appropriated dollar is matched by partners),
- Number of partners (number of partners involved in the projects).

Flow of Funds for Both Programs

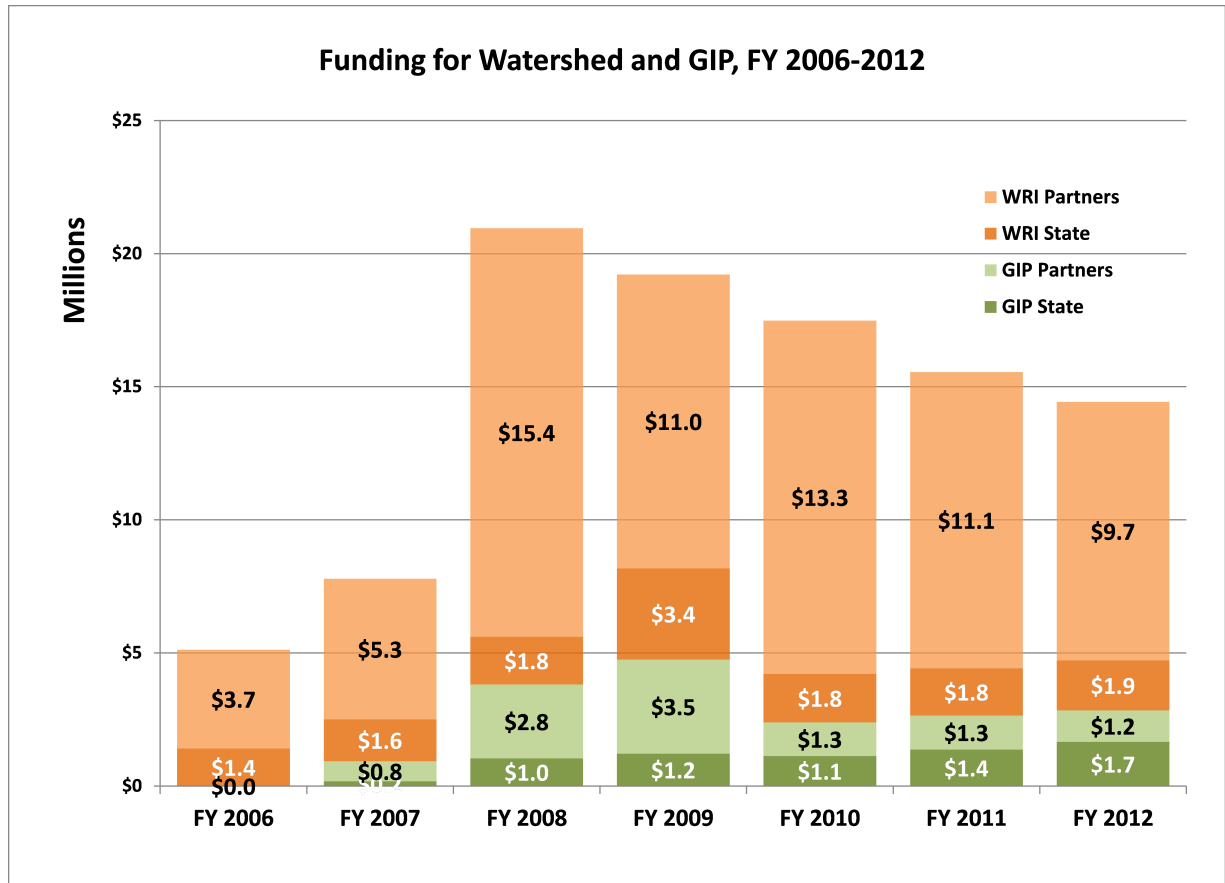
The following figure identifies the flow of funding (both from the Legislature and from various partners) through the two programs over time. The total funding expended on watershed restoration and grazing improvement in Utah between FY 2006 and FY 2012 is almost \$104 million.

\$103.8 Million Spent for Watershed and GIP Projects in Seven Years in Utah



Funding Spent by Program by Year

The figure below provides the amount of funding spent by each program and their partners by year between FY 2006 and FY 2012.



Better Accountability and Collaboration

The 2013 Legislature required GIP and WRI to "identify performance measures that track and report the public benefits from their projects" and to provide "a plan to improve the coordination and collaboration between the two programs." In response to the legislative intent, the managers of the two programs reported to the Natural Resources, Agriculture, and Environmental Quality Appropriations Subcommittee on September 10, 2013.

Performance Measures

The two programs provided the following new performance measures they will start using and reporting:

Grazing Improvement Program

- Increase in AUM (Animal Unit Month)

Watershed Restoration Initiative

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- Catastrophic fires prevented or limited (savings from lower firefighting costs and property not destroyed)
 - Acres restored after fires (post-fire damage avoided, such as forage not lost to invasive species or flood damages avoided)
 - Additional forage produced
 - Additional water yield in streams, wells, and springs
 - Water quality improvements
 - Vegetation resilience

GIP and Watershed Cooperation and Collaboration Plan

The plan for cooperation and collaboration between the two programs includes the following:

- GIP coordinators will actively participate in their respective WRI Regional Teams.
- Give DWR regional habitat managers access to GIP database, so they can review projects.
- DWR habitat managers will be invited to and actively participate in GIP regional board meetings, including to help rank and review projects.
- Look for projects that lend themselves to collaboration.
- WRI Director will ensure that appropriate projects for GIP funding are forwarded by the deadline for entry into the GIP database.
- GIP Director will ensure that appropriate project for WRI funding are entered into the WRI database by the deadline.
- Invite WRI Director, Alan Clark, and Manager, Tyler Thompson, to state GIP board meetings, where they can take part in reviewing and ranking the regional projects.
- Continue to hold joint meetings between GIP and WRI to look for projects that have interest to both parties for funding or projects that fit better with one funding source or the other.
- Participate in field tours to benefit and learn from successes and failures in the implementation of projects.
- Participate in joint training workshops.